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Approved For Release 2002/07/03 : CIA-RDP79R00890A000700030017-9

DOCUMENT NO.

NO CHANGE IN CLASS. LI

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CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C

NEXT REVIEW DATE:

AUTH: HR 70-2

DATE 1-14-80

REVIEWER:

21 March 1956

NSC BRIEFING

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- I. Conditions in Algeria continue to deteriorate, and France is air-lifting two more NATO divisions from West Germany to reinforce the approximately 190,000 troops already on the scene (map).
- A. In fighting since 1 March, rebels estimated to have lost 426: French military losses total 36 killed.
- B. French settler "action group" has warned Paris that if some 100 Algerians rebels (now under death sentence) are not executed, they will be lynched.
1. French Minister Lacoste in Algiers both unwilling to order executions and doubtful that police would defend prisons in face of settler attack.
 2. Algerian underground National Liberation Front (FLN) has warned that, for every Algerian "patriot" executed, two persons will be killed in retaliation.
- C. Rebels, who have previously concentrated attacks in rural areas, exhibited new tactics during past week.
1. On 15 March, set fire to several French buildings in European center of Algiers and suburbs.
 2. Night of 16-17 March, set fire to public building in Tlemcen (a principal city in western Algeria).
- D. Settler delegates to Paris conference last week expressed fear that Algerian uprising would occur before end of March: claimed complete lack of protection for isolated farms, estimated that massacre of some 6,000 French farmers likely.

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II. Rebel strength still believed to be from 20 to 40,000.

A. Overall command believed to be outside Algeria, possibly in Tripoli or Cairo.

1. Commander alleged to be Mohamed ben Bella (former warrant officer in French army, decorated after battle of Monte Cassino) who is often seen in Cairo.

B. Within Algeria, rebel units operate independent of one another: probably do not have rapid communications between units.

C. Rebel recruitment believed to be on rise--many Algerian workers in France returning to Algeria allegedly in response to rebel mobilization orders.

1. Paris now trying to block return of Algerians to North Africa.

D. Rebel funds acquired by local assessment, extortion and from Arab states.

1. French press estimates that, to end '55, Arab states supplied \$172,000 (\$86,000 from Saudi Arabia; \$71,000 from Iraq, smaller amounts from Indonesia, Jordan and Pakistan).

III. Meanwhile, US ConGen Clark reports serious Algerian economic dislocation.

A. Many public buildings, particularly schools, destroyed.

B. Communications in state of near-collapse--derailments have seriously damaged rolling stock.

1. Example: movement of iron ore from important Ouenza mine (3 million tons a year) "seriously" curtailed.

2. In many areas, rebels cut telephone and telegraph lines at will.
 - C. Even provision of foodstuffs a serious problem in some areas.
 - D. ConGen concludes that extensive rehabilitation essential and must precede broad-scale economic program envisaged in Mollet Algeria policy.
- IV. Elsewhere in French North Africa, no new problems in sight at moment.
- A. In Morocco, granted "independence" on 2 March, cease-fire by Berber dissidents anticipated in near future.
 - B. Similar declaration of Tunisian "independence" expected hourly.

21 MARCH 1956

ALGERIA

I. France is air-lifting two more NATO divisions from West Germany to Algeria, as reinforcements for approxi 190,000 troops already on scene (Map).

A. In fighting since 1 March, rebels dead total some 500: French military losses total some 56.

B. During past week, rebels, who have previously concentrated attacks in rural areas, have exhibited new tactics

1. On 16 March, set fire to several French buildings in European centers of city of Algiers and suburbs.
2. Night of 16-17 March, set fire to public building in Tlemcen (a principal city in western Algeria).

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extensive engagement between French
and rebels yet fought in 17-month-old
guerrilla conflict, 150 miles east of
Algiers, in department of Constantine,
107 rebels (including 2 chiefs) were
killed in course of 36-hour running
battle, during which French brought
helicopters
mainly
not only troops but tanks and jets to
bear.

D. Settler delegates to Paris conference
last week expressed fear that Algerian
uprising will occur before end of March;
claimed complete lack of protection for
isolated farms, estimated that massacre
of some 6,000 French farmers likely.

II. Rebel strength still believed to be from
20 to 40,000.

A. Overall command believed to be outside
Algeria, possibly in Tripoli or Cairo.

1. Commander alleged to be Mohamed ben Bella (former warrant officer in French army, decorated after battle of Monte Cassino) who frequently seen in Tripoli, Cairo, Rome, Geneva, Madrid.

B. Within Algeria, rebel units operate independent of one another: probably do not have rapid communications between units.

C. Rebel recruitment believed on rise-- over 12,000 Algerian workers in France returned to Algeria in past two months, allegedly in response to rebel mobilization orders.

Ministre
1. Resident Lacoste now trying to block return any more.

D. Rebel funds acquired by local assessment, extortion, and from Arab states.

1. French press estimates that, to end '55, Arab states supplied \$ 172,000 (\$86,000 from Saudi Arabia, \$71,000 from Iraq, smaller amounts from Jordan, and even some from Pakistan and Indonesia.

III. Meanwhile, US ConGen Clark reports serious Algerian economic dislocation.

- A. Many public buildings, particularly schools, destroyed.
- B. Communications in state of near-collapse--derailments have seriously damaged rolling stock.
 - 1. Example: movement of iron ore from important Ouenza mine (over 2 million tons a year) "seriously" curtailed.
 - 2. In many areas, rebels cut telephone and telegraph lines at will.

C. Even provision of food stuffs a serious problem in some areas

D. ConGen concludes that extensive rehabilitation is essential and must precede broad-scale economic program envisaged in Mollet's Algeria policy.

IV. Elsewhere in French North Africa, no new problems in sight at moment.

A. In Morocco, declared "independent" on 2 March, cease-fire by Berber dissident anticipated in near future.

B. Similar declaration of Tunisian "independence" came on 20 March.

V. Meanwhile, French "nationalism" reportedly more evident today than any time since H W L

A. All segments opinion reportedly giving fanatic support to maintenance French "position" Algeria.

B. Strong feeling "anti-Americanism" believed largely effort find scapegoat.

C.. Although Premier Mollet, other officials state no "official" complaint about US policy, they claim public opinion views US as opposing France.

D. French press has been major contributor to anti-American attitude.

VI. In effort counter rising sentiment, US Amb. Dillon on 20 Mar made Paris speech affirming US sympathy and support for "liberal" solution Algerian problem.

- A. Initial French official and press reaction very favorable.
- B. Nonetheless, influential & often critical Le Monde, despite favorable news-play, could not resist acid comment that Dillon speech was "victory of European and pro-French camp in State Department over the champions of 'anti-Colonialism' and appeasement of the Arabs".

1. Whole Algerian issue presents neat dilemma
for Communists, since USSR--recognizing
France as weak link in NATO--hopes to
weaken French alliance with West, promote
"united front".

A. Yet "correct" Soviet line on Algeria
(i.e. support for rebels as champions
oppressed nationalist) would mortally
offend French, while reversal of line
would damage Soviet prestige throughout
Asia and particularly among new friends
in Middle East.

B. French Communists have already turned
selves inside out on issue: upheld
"independence" for Algeria until Oct
'55, then shifted emphasis to "inde-
pendence within French Union" for all
North African areas, finally (12 Mar)
vated down line for grant of broad
powers to Mollet.

C. USSR, itself, has been walking on eggs.
In Oct 55, Khrushchev issued razor-edge
statement, expressing hope for solution
in North Africa satisfactory to all
parties.

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